



The author's face is well known to TV audiences, but as president of Random House he also ranks as one of the country's leading book publishers (see page 112).

BOOKS ARE HERE TO STAY

By BENNETT CERF

Is TV really turning our children into "red-eyed, illiterate morons"? Here is a surprising answer from an authority.

Among insistent articulate supporters of the utterly erroneous notion that television has hurt the sale of good books in this country are, unfortunately, a number of gloomy publishers themselves.

Publishers cry more easily than anybody else on earth. A simple routine inquiry like "How's business?" is enough to make their tears flow like water, diluting their vintage wines and drenching the decks of their private yachts.

To hear them tell it, there's always something threatening to bankrupt half the publishers extant. Television is merely their latest bugaboo. At the turn of the century, believe it or not, one reputable—and comfortably rich—publisher solemnly assured a reporter from the New York Tribune that interurban

trolley cars spelled the doom of reading in America!

Those were the days when cities from sixty to a hundred miles apart had been linked by car tracks, and trolleys built to resemble Pullman cars would swing and sway—without Sammy Kaye—as they rattled between New York and New Haven, or Philadelphia and Atlantic City, or Chicago and Milwaukee at a dizzying speed of thirty-five to forty miles an hour. A boy would climb aboard on Sunday morning, a blushing maid on one arm and a box lunch in the other, and settle down happily to the clang-clang of that trolley Judy Garland sang about many years later. Arrived at the end of the run, the trolley pole and the seats would be reversed, and everybody would ride right back to the starting point.

And this, averred our dour publisher (His name? All right, it was Henry Holt), was going to ruin the publishing industry!

When time proved him wrong, another dread menace arose—the bicycle! Hot-blooded young bucks would hoist reluctant lady friends aboard their bikes on Friday evening and set out on "century runs." It mattered little where they rode—so long as they could clock an even hundred miles before they staggered home, foot- and saddlesore, on Sunday night. This gave them a full week at the office to heal bruises—and rest up for another century run the following weekend.

But despite trolley cars and bicycles, the sale of books crept higher year by year. Publishers had to find some new menace to worry about—and they didn't

(Continued on Page 78)

proved in
MASSACHUSETTS
and coast to coast

We pay claims within 8 hours after proof of loss*



"I personally proved the 8-hour story," says Francis J. Laurence, Mattapan, Mass. "Just 8 hours after proof of damage to my car I had my check from American Hardware Mutual."

Ask any of our 236,000 policyholders about (1) our fair, fast claim payments (2) annual dividend payments that mean lower premiums (3) expert insurance counsel.



Insurance for Home, Automobile, Business

HOME OFFICE: MINNEAPOLIS. SERVICE OFFICES: ATLANTA, BOSTON, CHICAGO, CINCINNATI, DULUTH, HOUSTON, LOS ANGELES, MINNEAPOLIS, NEWARK, PHILADELPHIA, PORTLAND, ORE., RENO, ST. PAUL, SAN FRANCISCO, SEATTLE, SPOKANE, SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

*Except in those states where specific waiting periods are required by law.

Books are Here to Stay (Continued from Page 31)

have long to wait. This time the dangers were serious! Henry Ford and others perfected a cheap automobile; Thomas Edison and others developed a motion-picture machine. Soon the people who weren't spending every leisure moment tootling down dust-laden highways were thrilling over *The Perils of Pauline* in a neighborhood nickelodeon.

Anybody fortunate enough, however, to have learned the joys of reading in his formative years knows that there never has been and never will be a substitute for a really good book. All the wisdom of the ages, all the tales that have delighted mankind for generations, are there at your finger tips, at negligible cost, to be picked up, savored, digested, and laid down exactly as your fancy dictates. That's why more good books will continue to be sold every year, despite all gimmicks and distractions.

According to official figures from the United States Census Bureau, the sale of books in the U.S.A.—exclusive of textbooks and encyclopedias—was 333,000,000 in 1947. Seven years later, in 1954, when the Bings and the Berles and the Balls and the Bennys already were the toasts of countless TV addicts, that sale was up to 587,000,000—a whopping increase of over 75 per cent. Unofficial figures indicate another 12 per cent increase through 1957. The circulation of books in the country's public libraries shows a consistent and gratifying jump of 33 per cent from 1947 to 1956. The rate of increase in children's books is even greater.

The time to start driving home the idea that books can be a source of lifelong pleasure, in fact, is when a child has turned six—and is barely beginning to learn to read. Wonderful books for beginners—like Dr. Seuss's inspired *The Cat in the Hat*—are now available to make the parents' task easier, but the ideal system is to convince children that parents, too, enjoy reading. Many a time I have heard mothers and fathers wail, "My kids sit rooted in front of that confounded TV set all day and never dream of opening a book"—only to discover that there are no books in the house for the kids to open. Parents who themselves haven't read three books since they graduated from elementary school should not be too surprised if their children stumble along in their misguided footsteps! Put a couple of attractive books within reach of your children—let them see you dipping into books occasionally yourself—and the results may surprise you!

Don't be annoyed if your child devours countless comic strips or reads accounts of the same baseball game in six different papers—the latter, of course, only on days when the team he favors has registered a victory. The fact that he's reading *anything* is important. The transition to worth-while books can be negotiated later—especially if a qualified, inspired teacher providentially pops up to lead the way. Three inveterate readers out of four gratefully remember one outstanding teacher—too late do they discover also that he usually was disgracefully underpaid—who first imbued them with excitement over a book.

I myself was a hopeless case until my freshman year at Columbia when I encountered a teacher named Harrison Steeves. Steeves' enthusiasm was so infectious that he convinced even the football team that Dickens, Hardy and Meredith were more fun to read than Ballyhoo and Captain Billy's Whiz-bang. He even undid the damage done by high-school authorities who jammed dull, outmoded books like *Lorna Doone*, *Cranford*, and

The Mill on the Floss down our throats.

These books, unfortunately, are still required reading in some of our best prep schools. Instructors who assign them alienate more potential booklovers than all the radio and TV sets in the world. Adolescents today demand the fiction of Hemingway and Faulkner, the fact books of Gunther and Michener. Musty Victorian "classics" bore them to death. My own sixteen-year-old son Chris spent a good part of his Christmas vacation devouring J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*. The younger set of 1958 seems to regard Salinger with the kind of reverence their fathers reserved for Scott Fitzgerald and Thomas Wolfe.

I encountered Professor Steeves again years after I graduated. "Because of you," I conceded, "I am now a book publisher."

"And because you are a publisher," he countered, "I hereby place into your hands the manuscript of a murder mystery I have written. It is called *Good Night, Sheriff*."

Let no man say I did not recognize my duty under the circumstances. I published it. Three printings sold out, too, so this story has a happy ending all around!

It would be folly not to concede that the advent of television—aided and abetted by the burgeoning popularity of quarter paperbacks—has materially dented the sale of hard-back whodunits and Western novels. There now are so many "hoss opreys" on TV that a nimble channel switcher can see a bullet fired by Two-gun Topplitz on CBS whiz through a stagecoach window on ABC and plug the varmint from Bar-None Ranch on NBC! Myron Cohen, the night-club comedian, tells about one lad in Brooklyn who averaged six wild-West programs a day. His mother sought to lure him away from the machine for dinner one evening, but the boy shot his pistol into the air and drawled, "Thanks, pard, but I reckon I ain't got any hankerin' tonight for matzoth balls." When folks can get buckets of gore and an endless cacophony of gunplay by the flick of a dial, there's certainly less likelihood of their seeking more of the

(Continued on Page 80)

So We Commemorate



A PIONEER GANGSTER

Leering down at all comers from a cliff above the harbor of Skagway, Alaska, is a white-painted skull twenty-five feet high, shaped of natural stone. It serves as a reminder of the abrupt end of Skagway's leading bad man, Jefferson R. (Soapy) Smith, and is lettered: SOAPY SMITH'S SKULL.

Soapy Smith, a lanky, sardonic saloonkeeper with a long black beard, ruled Skagway ruthlessly during the hectic 1898 gold rush. Hijacking, shakedowns and the stealthy technique of taking rivals "for a ride" were among his specialties long before Chicago and New York gangsters used them.

If his crooked gambling tables failed to part a flush prospector from hard-earned gold, Soapy resorted to holdup at pistol point. When he publicly robbed grizzled old Alexander Steward of \$3,500 in nuggets, however, it was too much even for wide-open Skagway to stomach.



Bearded Soapy Smith strikes a pose with Gold Rush pals.

Frank Reid, a railroad construction boss for the White Pass and Yukon Railway, organized vigilantes. Soapy and his gang overawed them without a shot. Then Reid called a law-and-order meeting on a harbor pier. Sneering, Soapy stalked down the pier to break up the meeting. Reid, .45 in hand, warned—then fired. Soapy shot back.

Soapy died almost instantly. Reid passed away in agony twelve days later. The two were buried nearly side by side. But where Soapy's wooden slab bore only his name, age and death date, Reid's marble monument is inscribed: FRANK REID—THE MAN WHO GAVE HIS LIFE FOR THE HONOR OF SKAGWAY.

Harold Helfer

(Continued from Page 78) same between the covers of a book. There is no reason at all for a true booklover to scorn television entirely, so long as he carefully restricts himself to the one or two programs definitely worth watching each day. That consumes an hour or two an evening at the very most—and leaves plenty of time for fruitful reading. Discount those benighted souls who sit rooted before a TV set for hours on end, in a sort of semistupor, unable to tell you when they finally stagger off to bed whether they saw a wrestling match, Lawrence Welk or John Cameron Swayze. Don't tell me that if their eyes weren't riveted on TV they'd be opening a book! Probably they'd open nothing at all; just close something—their minds!

I am one book publisher, in short, who is convinced that far from hindering the reading of good books, television definitely has encouraged it. What happened when CBS inaugurated its Sunrise Semester experiment in the New York area recently is a case in point.

Sunrise Semester was dedicated to the dubious proposition that a justifiable number of jaded New Yorkers would get up at 6:30 in the morning just to hear a college professor deliver them a half-hour lecture about a book! Yet it took Prof. Floyd Zulli, of New York University,

only a single week to prove that the idea was feasible. The book he chose to discuss was Stendhal's venerable *The Red and the Black*—originally published in France away back in 1831. I was one who, arising earlier than I had in ten years, staggered to my set at 6:29 A.M. for the tee-off, to see what would happen.

Professor Zulli, it developed, had planned no concessions to his television audience. There were no dramatic scenes from the book enacted in the background, no underclad, undulating females to simmer and lead him to and from his hot seat. He simply confronted his listeners as he would an English-lit. class in any college in the country and, a copy of *The Red and the Black* in hand, talked for a half hour in measured, academic tones.

How many people tuned in to hear what Professor Zulli had to say? I was in a unique position to find out—because the only English version of *The Red and the Black* in print at the time came in the Modern Library series, published by my own firm, Random House. For the previous four years we had averaged about 1200 copies annually—almost exclusively for college use. In the nine days following the inauguration of the Sunrise Semester program we sold over 5000 copies—more than in the four previous years combined!

Professor Zulli's program proved so popular, in fact, that it not only has been prolonged indefinitely but undoubtedly will be repeated in other metropolitan centers—hopefully not in the middle of the night, either! If a single person can so stimulate the sale of a hitherto partially neglected classic, possibilities for future expansion are obviously unlimited.

Chronic kill-joys who insist—with an infuriating smacking of their lips—that television is murdering culture in America and turning our children into a race of red-eyed, illiterate morons, overlook one demonstrable fact. Television has been directly responsible for an almost unbelievable improvement in the caliber and variety of juvenile literature in this country.

When I was a boy, children's books were confined largely to illustrated classics and sappy, overpriced concoctions like *Woofy the Whale* and *Marmaduke the Mongoose*. Today kids watch TV programs based on history, or detailing the wonders of the seas, stars and weather. When they turn away from their sets, they demand books that will give them further details. Explore the expanding juvenile departments in any book or department store and you'll find a comforting variety of well-written, well-produced books for youngsters on history and exploration,

hurricanes and volcanoes, and even rockets and guided missiles. The sale of worth-while juveniles, in fact, has increased so rapidly since the advent of TV that today it is the mainstay of some of the country's most famous publishing houses. Fifty-four million juveniles were sold in 1947. In 1957 the net total will be close to 270,000,000—an increase of 400 per cent!

In other words, alert publishers who recognize television for the powerful influence it exerts, and shape their programs accordingly, have increasing cause to bless TV instead of reviling it. The book, newspaper and magazine publishers who are having the most trouble with TV are the ones who haven't learned to live with it. How stubbornly—and how vainly—they close their eyes to its potentials, hoping, no doubt, that if they just sit tight long enough it will quietly go away!

Television provides one additional boon for parents who like to read a book without the blare of a rock-and-roll program for accompaniment. As author John O'Hara has suggested, you need only herd all your own and your neighbors' children into a deep basement rumpus room, turn on TV, unlock the door once a week just long enough to throw them a couple of fish heads—and everybody's happy!

THE END

NEXT WEEK

RELIGIOUS REVOLUTION ON THE CAMPUS

A College Chaplain's Report on the Decline of Cynicism

The Mail Frauds are After You

BIG MAN IN SMALL HOUSES

ROYAL BARRY WILLS:

High-Priced Architect and His \$5000-Home Design

Stronghold of the KUKUKUKU

By ROBERT C. RUARK

New Guinea's Most Murderous Tribe

IN COLOR:

Grade School in California

DEATH STALKS THE BRIDE

A New Mystery by Nancy Rutledge